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Coalition for a U.S.-Russia CIVILIAN NUCLEAR PARTNERSHIP

The United States-Russia Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

The Obama Administration has taken a significant step to enhance trade between the United States and Russia by submitting to Congress a U.S.-Russia Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement. This agreement will allow the U.S. and Russia, two leaders in the development of clean, safe, nuclear energy technology, to share information and technologies for nuclear power generation, while providing a clear regulatory framework to ensure that it will only be used for peaceful purposes.

The agreement will build on nearly a generation of successful cooperation between the United States and Russia through the Megatons to Megawatts program in which uranium from Russian nuclear weapons is brought to the United States, repurposed and used in American nuclear power plants to provide approximately 10% of the electricity generated in the U.S. today. Megatons-to-Megawatts will expire in 2013 and the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement is the next step forward in our successful partnership.

The Agreement will benefit both the United States and Russia by:

- Expanding commercial opportunities for American and Russian nuclear energy companies to work together in the United States, in Russia and around the world;
- Allowing our respective nuclear energy industries to benefit from each other's technological strengths at a time when the U.S. is seeking to re-build its civil nuclear infrastructure, and;
- Establishing a framework for commercial nuclear cooperation that strengthens efforts by both countries to set a non-proliferation standard for the world.

Helping America Achieve its Energy Goals

The U.S. nuclear industry is entering a period of expansion after a 30-year pause in the development of commercial nuclear power. During this period, foreign companies, including Russian companies, have continuously invested in nuclear energy services and technologies. Entering into agreements to share technology and expertise with any other country first requires a Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement. The proposed agreement with Russia would help the U.S. by:

- Allowing the U.S. nuclear industry to gain access to advanced Russian nuclear fuel-cycle technologies that produce LEU and fuel assemblies more efficiently;
- Facilitating joint ventures between Russian and American companies to provide nuclear energy services and technologies to the world market;
- Helping U.S. utilities to obtain nuclear fuel-cycle services that produce more energy and that reduce electricity costs for American consumers;
- Opening the Russian market to commercial nuclear power technologies and services offered by American companies;
- Allowing U.S. and Russian companies to license specific technologies to improve their service offerings.

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Specific Technical Opportunities

In certain areas, particularly uranium enrichment and reprocessing, Russian civil nuclear technology is among the most efficient in the world. This agreement would allow the U.S. to take advantage of Russian innovations to benefit U.S. nuclear research and development programs. Specific technical benefits to the U.S. could include:

- Enabling joint research by American and Russian companies on emerging technologies – particularly important for the development of advanced, proliferation-resistant fuel cycles;
- Allowing cooperation related to safety of fuel recycling and civil uses of plutonium;
- Continuing research in next-generation nuclear fuels;
- Developing international solutions to deal with spent fuel and waste isolation;
- Creating uniform requirements for the safety of nuclear power plants and developing new nuclear material and facility monitoring, control and accounting technologies.

Non – Proliferation Cooperation

A Commercial Nuclear Cooperation Agreement would not only deepen commercial ties between the U.S. and Russia, but also strengthen bilateral diplomatic relations and cooperation on international security issues. Opportunities and policy benefits could include:

- Supporting joint development of proliferation-resistant reactors and fuel management technologies;
- Allowing the U.S. to provide uranium to the Russia's IAEA-controlled uranium "fuel bank." This U.S.-supported facility eliminates the need for countries to develop indigenous uranium enrichment capability by guaranteeing access to commercial reactor fuel.
- Providing the regulatory framework for the U.S. and Russia to collaborate on range of threat reduction programs and to develop a new international civil nuclear energy framework.

Background

The requirement for a Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the United States and other countries was created by Section 123 of the United States Atomic Energy Act, entitled "Cooperation with other Nations." This agreement must be in place in order to permit sharing and licensing of nuclear material, equipment, or components.

The United States has entered into Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreements with 21 individual countries, the European Atomic Energy Community which represents 28 European nations, and the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency.¹ Establishing a Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement with Russia is a natural next step in deepening the relationship and trade ties between our two countries, as the U.S. has done with many other nations.

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Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreements must be submitted to Congress for a 90-day review period, during which time the House and Senate can take joint action to approve or reject the Agreement. The Agreement automatically goes into effect if Congress does not act within the 90-day review period.

¹ The countries/entities in which the U.S. has entered into 123 Agreements include: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), India, Indonesia, IAEA, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Morocco, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine. Note that Euratom comprises the nations of: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.

<http://nnsa.energy.gov/aboutus/ourprograms/nonproliferation/treatiesagreements/123agreementsforpeacefulcooperation>

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